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NURSING CONDITIONS IN LOUISIANA

BY EMMA L. WALL, R.N.

New Orleans, La.

For some time it has been my wish and intention to tell the JOURNAL readers something about nursing conditions in Louisiana and what progress has been made in the last decade.

In the year 1889, a small group of women established a women's and children's hospital and opened a training school for nurses, the first in the south. At that time there were three hospitals in New Orleans, two (Hotel Dieu and Charity Hospital) had Sisters of Charity as nurses and the third, Touro Infirmary, had attendants of the "Sairy Gamp" type.

All were averse to trained nurses, the usual objections of men to women's ventures in untried fields. Twenty-five years ago the woman wage-earner was still much in the minority, and there were very few occupations which were considered respectable for ladies. All families had their old, "black Mammy" nurse who cared for the "chilluns" and the ills of the grown folks. To the women of the north and east this may sound absurd but, as you know, prior to the Civil War the women of the south led lives of only ease and luxury; while after peace was declared many women had to put their shoulders to the wheel, though few avenues of work were open, even after many years.

The birth of the trained nurse, the trials and tribulations of training schools and nurses in pioneer days, is an old story, and the southern nurse had much with which to contend. The superintendents were all northern or eastern women who thought the women of the south were lazy because they lacked their energy and vim, which is largely governed by climatic influence.

However, the little, planted seed grew and now after twenty-five years Louisiana is quite as progressive as many states that had nurses many years before it did. Unlike most other states, Louisiana has only one large city, New Orleans. Shreveport is next in size and has three excellent training schools. There are also training schools in Alexandria, Monroe, Bogalusa and other towns, but the nursing conditions are mostly controlled in New Orleans.

After a few years' struggle in getting training schools started and the doctors and the public educated as to the help and comfort trained and educated women were, we, in New Orleans, were fortunate in securing several nurses of the highest type as superintendents of our training schools. Then in a few years the vocation of trained nurse was added to the list of respectable occupations open to women, and

today our pupil and graduate nurses are representatives of our best families.

In 1904, we saw the need of organization and the Louisiana State Nurses' Association was formed. That same year a bill was brought before the State Legislature asking for state registration but was defeated on the ground that it was unconstitutional. We had asked for a mixed board and, according to the laws of Louisiana, women cannot serve on state boards. Well, we worked and waited, and in 1912 again presented a bill which was passed. Now, though our board is composed entirely of doctors, the Louisiana State Nurses' Association nominate them for appointment by the governor of the state. After a little over two years we have approximately eight hundred registered nurses in the state and twelve accredited training schools. Registration is not compulsory, but the majority of the nurses have complied with the law.

In October 1914, we started a central directory for registered nurses only, which is meeting with much success. The registrar is a registered nurse. New Orleans is probably the best field of any city for the private nurse, as in the majority of cases the nurses do only twelve-hour duty. We have a number of nurses from other states located here, who are members of our Association and who are in excellent standing in the community.

IMPROVISING

A SWING AND CONVENIENT IRRIGATION

By LEONORE L. RALL, R.N.

Colorado Springs, Colo.

Even with a limited supply of articles in a small, and not too generously equipped hospital, one can find substitutes more readily than one can imagine by using a little thought and patience.

Go with me into a poorly furnished and almost destitute home and even there we will find, with a little practical ingenuity, something that will answer our purpose. In this particular instance (a surgical case), a young boy needed constant irrigation on a very bad limb and the limb had to be elevated. I stood perplexed, gazing at the ceiling, the loose plaster threatening a deluge at any moment. It would be perilous to even suggest such a thing as a nail or hook.

"We'll git them flies after a bit, Miss," the older brother ventured. "I am not after flies now," I replied, "but get me a board about twenty-six inches long and about four inches wide and I'll show you what I want."